

But... Good Friday  
Acts 13:27-31

## Slide 1

It was supposed to be a day marked with celebration, but it was a day defined by tragedy.

It was supposed to be a day friends gathered together, but it was a day that friends scattered.

It was supposed to be a day when people paused to remember what God had done for man, but instead, people would mark this day as what man did to God.

“But” is such a powerful word, only 3 letters however it’s the hinge that turns the entire meaning of a statement.

For example, Martin Luther King, Jr. said, *“If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but... whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.”* After the but, comes the truth.

This morning I want to look at a passage found in the book of Acts. In Acts 13:27-31, Paul, while preaching to a crowd in Antioch, spelled out the Easter story in a mere 115 words.

In these 115 words, there are two important “buts;” a “but” for Good Friday and a “but” for Easter. Today we look at the “but” for Good Friday.

Acts 13:27-28, *“The people in Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize Jesus as the one the prophets had spoken about. Instead, they condemned him, and in doing this they fulfilled the prophets’ words that are read every Sabbath. They found no legal reason to execute him, but they asked Pilate to have him killed anyway.”*

Did you catch the “but” in verse 28... *“They found no legal reason to execute him, **but...**”* (after the but comes the truth) *“they asked Pilate to have him killed anyway.”*

So, who were “They?” Well, according to the account, they were the religious leaders and the people in Jerusalem.

People who, less than a week before, on the day we call Palm Sunday, waved palm branches and cried *“Hosanna to the highest, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”*

And now, just five short days later, a scant 120 hours, the crowd's voice had changed from a melodious *“Hosanna in the highest”* to a venomous *“Crucify Him.”*

## **Slide 2**

How did the religious leaders of the day stir the people into such a murderous frenzy?

No longer were they shopkeepers or butchers, shepherds or tailors, now they were a blood crazed mob. How did this happened?

Well, you must understand that the people of Jerusalem, 2000 years ago, weren't any different than people today. Especially if you recall the events of January 6, 2021!

When Rembrandt painted *The Raising of the Cross*, he painted his own face into the crowd at the foot of the cross to remind himself that it was for his sins that Christ died on the cross.

For three years Jesus had taught the people, for three years Jesus had healed the people, for three years Jesus had feed the people, and for three years Jesus had offered the people of Jerusalem His grace and His forgiveness. The people could have embraced Jesus, But...

Regardless of how the people of Jerusalem felt when they welcomed Jesus on that previous Sunday, some of the same people were now openly hostile to Him and His claim to be the Son of God.

They were more than happy for Jesus to go around healing the sick and feeding the hungry but, when He claimed to be the Son of God and challenged their morality, they were outraged.

One of Jesus' closest friends recorded in John 12:37, *“Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.”*

Like today, we must understand that the people were just pawns for their leaders.

And, at the center of the plot against Jesus, were the religious leaders, which was odd. As those who professed to serve God were the ones who seemed the most intent on killing God's Son.

But there had been conflict almost from the beginning as Jesus challenged their traditions.

### **Slide 3**

Now, the religious leaders could have accepted Jesus, But...

He was the One whom they had been waiting for, the Messiah, God's chosen one. The problem was, He threatened the status quo.

The priests viewed themselves as the people's access to God, but Jesus claimed to be God and welcomed everyone.

The Pharisees claimed to know everything there was to know about how to keep the Law, but they refused to accept the grace that Jesus extended.

The more Jesus taught the further the religious leaders distanced themselves from His teaching.

His gospel of Grace was at odds with their teaching of the law. His compassion contrasted with their legalism.

His invitation to know God threatened their perceived position as God's Gate Keepers -- those who decided who did and didn't have access to the divine.

So, they tried to discredit Him and, when that didn't work, they decided to kill Him.

*Luke 19:47-48, "Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words."*

Their feelings about Jesus weren't a secret. Matthew 27:18 records this about Jesus' trial, *"For he (Pilate) knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him."*

They could've accepted Jesus and His teachings, but they rejected the very One for whom they had waited so long.

Even though the religious leaders wanted to be rid of their problem, they didn't have the authority to deal with Him the way they wanted, so they appealed to the power of Rome.

But it wasn't just the religious leaders...

#### **Slide 4**

Let's pick up the story in John 18:28, *"Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness they did not enter the palace, because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover."*

The religious leaders had a problem. They had accused Jesus of blasphemy, but blasphemy was a religious charge and Pilate couldn't have cared less.

So, they accused him of something that would interest Rome. Luke 23:2, *"And they began to accuse him, saying, 'We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king.'"*

Now the charge has changed from blasphemy to treason. Then, when Pilate said that he didn't see any evidence of that, they upped the ante again.

Luke 23:5, *"Then they became insistent. 'But he is causing riots by his teaching wherever he goes—all over Judea, from Galilee to Jerusalem!'"* Riots? Seriously?

Pilate didn't want to execute Him, but he didn't want to alienate the religious leaders, either.

So, when they mentioned Galilee, he saw a way to remove himself from this mess by using the old "Pass the buck" trick.

Luke 23:6-7, *"On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time."*

This was the same Herod who had John the Baptist killed. His father had tried to kill Jesus when He was a newborn.

But Herod had heard about Jesus and wanted to meet him. He wanted to see Him perform a miracle.

Luke 23:8, *“When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort.”*

This is no different than today. Comedians say, when they meet someone, that they’re asked to say something funny.

Magicians say that they’re often asked to perform a trick. Seldom does a preacher get to eat in a group without being the person who’s asked to say grace.

But we’re told that Jesus doesn’t even grace Herod with an answer, let alone a miracle. So, Herod puts a purple robe on Him and sends Him back to Pilate, saying that he just found Jesus annoying.

What’s Pilate to do? He has the religious leaders, and the mob that they had incited, demanding that Jesus be executed, but he can’t find any evidence to support a case against Him and neither can Herod.

About that time, Pilate’s wife appeared and told him of a dream she had concerning Jesus and that Pilate should release Him. So, the political leaders could have freed Jesus, But...

Luke 23:13-15, *“Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death.”*

Pilate tried, he tells the crowd that, as a gesture of good will and because it’s the Passover, he would release one prisoner.

Then he stood Jesus up next to a known murderer named Barabbas and offered the crowd their choice of who should go free, he figured it was a no brainer.

But the mob, egged on by the authorities, yelled, "*Free Barabbas, crucify Jesus.*" Things were getting out of control, so Pilate had Jesus flogged, but even that didn't satisfy the bloodlust of the crowd.

Finally, in frustration, Pilate turns to the crowd and says, "*I am innocent of this man's blood. This is your responsibility!*" But it wasn't just Pilate and Herod who made choices that day.

### **Slide 5**

The disciples could have supported Jesus, But... Mark 14:50, "*Then everyone deserted him and fled.*"

For three years His disciples had been with Him. For three years they had listened to His teachings. For three years they had called themselves His closest friends, and now all but two disappeared.

John stayed and Judas hung himself. Peter, where are you? Andrew, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, Simon, Thaddeus, where are you?

When we think about Christ being denied, we think of Simon Peter, the big burly fisherman, quaking in fear in front of a little maid while swearing he'd never met Jesus.

The only difference between Peter and the other nine was that he did verbally what they did silently.

Like today, Christians find themselves in the same position as the Apostles. Will they stand with Christ, or will they choose the alternative?

It's easy to say that we'd never deny Christ, but how often do we deny His power in our lives.

Perhaps it's by refusing to believe He can straighten out the problem areas of your life. Maybe you deny Him by avoiding His house. Maybe He's your Savior, but He's never become your Lord.

## **Slide 6**

But... not everyone denied Jesus. John 19:25, *“Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.*

I find it interesting that four out of the five people who stood at the foot of the cross were women. Even today it's not unusual to find women outnumbering men in His service, and His services.

The fact that the majority of those at the foot of the cross were women shouldn't be surprising since, from the very beginning, Jesus' ministry was marked by the presence of women.

Throughout His ministry Christ had more contact with women than His culture found acceptable.

People today say, *“Pastor it's not right for women to exercise authority in the church.”* In fact, our own Baptist Faith and Message implies this. Yet, it's women who're known for missionary work (Lottie Moon, Annie Armstrong, Mary Hill Davis).

But... throughout the Bible we see that God used whoever was willing to be used, and whoever He wanted to use.

Of these five, we know nothing of Mary the wife of Clopas, other than her name was Mary, and she was the wife of Clopas, but what of the other four?



There Was Mary, Jesus' mother. Maybe she didn't understand what was happening to her Son, but she could love. Her presence there was the most natural thing in the world.

Jesus might have been a criminal in the eyes of the law, a blasphemer in the eyes of the religious leaders, and a rebel in the eyes of Rome, but He was still her Son.

There was Jesus' aunt. In John she's not named but in Mark 15 and Matthew 27 we discover she is Salome the mother of James and John.

It was Salome who Christ rebuked so strongly when she sought the chief position for her sons in heaven, and yet here she is at the cross.

Her presence says much for her humility for she had the ability to hear an opposing view and still love, something each one of us could stand to learn.

Then there was Mary Magdalene. All we know about Mary is what we're told in Mark 16:9, "*When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.*"

Mary would never forget what He had done for her. His love had rescued her, and her love would never forget Him.

Finally, there was John. He was the only one of the twelve who stayed. He's often called the disciple whom Christ loved and perhaps this explains why.

They could have played it safe, But... Five people! Of all the people Jesus had touched, only five stood by Him.

Five people! Of all the people He had healed, only five stayed with Him. Five people! Of all the people He had fed, only five stayed true to Him.

We have people like that in the church. If it snows more than five flakes in a row, it's enough to keep them home on a Sunday morning.

But praise God, we have those that if a tornado leveled the city, they'd be here on Sunday to praise His name. Those whose words prove Christ, but more than that... their actions, too.

It goes back to not just talking the talk. It's like the story of the hog and chicken who were out for a walk.

As they were strolling along, they came to a community center advertising a benefit breakfast featuring bacon and eggs on the menu.

*"Let's go in and see if we can help,"* said the chicken. *"That's alright for you to say,"* replied the pig, *"all they want from you is a contribution, but from me they want a commitment."*

How deep is your commitment level? Would you have been at the cross?

## **Slide 7**

### Conclusion

*Luke 23:39-42, "One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."*

This criminal was the odd man out, as far as we know he had no previous contact with Christ. Perhaps he'd been on the Mount of Olives and heard the Sermon on the Mount.

Or maybe he ate quietly in the crowd when Jesus multiplied the fish and loaves.

All we really know is that the thief on the cross did what even the faithful five neglected to do. He acknowledged Jesus for Who He was, the Son of God. This criminal could've rejected Jesus, but...

Now, we don't know what this criminal did to deserve to be crucified as the only information we have is recorded in Luke 23.

Luke 23:40-41, *"But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."*

We don't even know his name, though legend records it as Dismas. But what's important was his plea to Jesus. Luke 23:42b, *"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."*

Was this a chance encounter or a divine appointment? We may never know, but we do know that, on that Friday afternoon, the choices of the world today are the same as those two men who hung next to Jesus.

One chose to scoff and ridicule Jesus to dismiss His claims and to take his own chances with eternity. The other man chose to accept the claims and grace of the One who hung next to him.

Therefore, remember the words of Dismas, *"Jesus, remember me,"* and Jesus' promise: *"Today you will be with me in Paradise."*

On Good Friday, Jesus died for each one of us. So, the question is...  
How have we responded to that gift?